

Wildlife Express

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Idaho State Emblems

Photo: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons

inside

Do you know Idaho's state emblems?

State fish, insect and more.

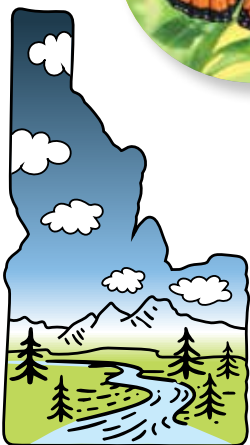
Does Idaho have a state bird and a state raptor?

Learn more about Idaho's state fruit and tree.



idfg.idaho.gov

Idaho STATE Emblems



Do you know all of Idaho's state emblems?

Some people call them state symbols. Many states have state symbols. They represent something special about the state or have special meaning or value to the people who live there. Their importance may be historic, scientific or economic. For something

to become a state emblem, it first must be proposed to the Idaho legislature. Elementary students have proposed many of Idaho's state emblems.

In this issue of Wildlife Express, we will learn about Idaho's state emblems. We will focus on Idaho's wildlife but will mention all of our state emblems. They are truly special!

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Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Idaho Giant Salamander

Idaho's State Amphibian



Giants are prowling Idaho's forests. They don't say, "fee, fie, foe or fum." They yelp. What are these giants? They are Idaho giant salamanders. Idaho giant salamanders are special. Most salamanders are voiceless, but Idaho giants can make a yelping sound. Idaho giant salamanders are only found in central Idaho and two places in western Montana. You can't find them anywhere else in the world!

Idaho giants are the largest salamanders in Idaho. They can grow to be over a foot long. If salamanders were football players, Idaho giants would be linemen. They have huge heads, bulky bodies and muscular legs.

Like other salamanders, Idaho giants have three life stages. They start as eggs, hatch into larvae (LAR-vee) and then turn into adults. Females lay 135 to 200 eggs in the spring. Each pea-sized egg is stuck under logs or rocks in clean, cold water. Females guard their eggs from danger until the eggs hatch. Once the eggs hatch, the mother leaves. She does not help her young find food or shelter.

Larvae stay in the stream and breathe with small gills on the sides of their heads. Larvae are usually brown with yellowish spots on their backs and sides. They eat insects, fishes, frogs and other salamanders. Most larvae change into adults by the time they are two years old, but some do not. They don't want to grow up and leave their watery home. They stay in the larval stage and may grow to be larger than the adults!

Adult Idaho giant salamanders are dark brown or black with gray, tan or copper-colored marks on their backs. They spend most of their time on land and only venture back to water to breed and lay eggs. Since they no longer spend the majority of time in water, they lose their gills and breathe with lungs. Adults are found in wet forests near streams, lakes and ponds. They usually hide during the day under rocks, logs or bark. They are most active on warm, rainy nights. Adults will eat just about anything they can catch and fit in their mouths. Insects, small snakes, mice, frogs and other salamanders are all eaten. Idaho giants are good climbers. They can climb up plants to a height of eight feet!

Look for Idaho giant salamanders next time you are in central and northern Idaho forests around mountain streams. Just be careful. Idaho giant salamanders have teeth that can break the skin. It might be best to just look at these giants.



Top Photo: CCBY Idaho Fish and Game - John Cossel
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Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Mountain Bluebird



Idaho's State Bird

begins to defend his territory and looks for the perfect nest cavity. Bluebirds nest in cavities such as old woodpecker nests. They also readily use nest boxes. When the gray-blue female arrives, she chooses her mate based on the location and quality of the nest cavity. A good location makes it more likely that the bluebirds can successfully raise their babies.

The female bluebird begins nesting by stuffing the nest cavity with dry grasses. Sometimes she puts so much grass inside that it pokes out the entrance. She then forms a small cup in the grass. This is where she will lay four to eight light-blue eggs. Like most songbirds, bluebird babies grow quickly. In about 20 days after hatching, the youngsters leave the nest. They are not too anxious to leave, though. They hang around with their parents for a few weeks before venturing out on their own. You can tell the young bluebirds apart from the adults by their spotted breasts. Mountain bluebird pairs often raise two broods each summer.

In the fall, mountain bluebirds gather in flocks of up to 50 birds. They migrate to the southwest, southern Great Plains and even Mexico. During this time, their diet changes from insects to fruits. Juniper, chokecherry, serviceberry, mountain ash, and other fruiting shrubs are important winter foods for mountain bluebirds.

If you are lucky enough to live near mountain bluebirds, try putting up a nest box. Contact your local Idaho Fish and Game office for nest box plans or check online. Having a nest box is a great way to enjoy seeing our state bird all summer long.

Photos: CCBY Catherine Zinsky,
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

If you ask someone to name an Idaho state symbol, chances are they will say, "mountain bluebird." This beautiful sky-blue bird became our state bird in 1931.

Bluebirds are members of the thrush family. The American robin is a familiar member of this family. In Idaho, we have eight different species of thrush. This includes two bluebirds, the mountain bluebird and the western bluebird.

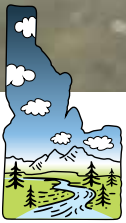
Thrushes live in woodlands or along the edges between woodlands and meadows. Some thrush species, like bluebirds, prefer open meadows. Thrushes are small to medium-sized songbirds that feed mainly on the ground. They eat a wide variety of foods including worms, snails, slugs, spiders, caterpillars, adult insects and fruit. Unlike other thrushes, mountain bluebirds often hover in the air before dropping down to catch their prey. They also pounce on prey animals from a perch.

Mountain bluebirds live in middle to high elevation places with a lot of open space. The beautiful sky-blue male comes back to his breeding territory as early as late winter. He



Cutthroat Trout

Idaho's State Fish



Cutthroat trout were named our state fish because of their importance in our history, and because they are true natives of Idaho. Cutthroats have lived in northern and eastern Idaho for thousands of years.

Cutthroat trout may be found in many different habitats. They may live in small mountain streams, large rivers or lakes. Some cutthroats live in very cold mountain streams; others live in warmer desert lakes.

The scientific name of the cutthroat is *Oncorhynchus clarkii*. The first part of the name, *Oncorhynchus*, means hooked nose. *Clarkii* is for the explorer William Clark. William Clark was the first person to describe cutthroat trout in detail. When Clark first saw the cutthroat trout, the red slash marks by the fish's throat caught his eye. He mentioned the red slash marks in his writings. This is where the fish got its common name of cutthroat trout.

Native Americans have their own names for the fish. The Nez Perce people call them waw'aalam. The Northern Paiute-Bannock named them tama agai. Cutthroat trout have been important to Native Peoples for about

10,000 years. Fish was eaten soon after being caught and dried on racks. Dried fish was an important food during the winter when other food was difficult to find.

Idaho has four different kinds of cutthroat trout. Westslope cutthroat live in northern and central Idaho. They are found in more areas than other cutthroat. This is most likely the cutthroat that William Clark described in his journal. Westslope cutthroat live in cool headwater rivers, streams and lakes. Their bodies are greenish-gold to dark red. They have small, irregular black spots on the back, upper sides and head. Most of the spots are concentrated near the tail.

Yellowstone cutthroat live in the eastern part of Idaho, where they are found in the Snake River and smaller rivers, streams and lakes. They are yellow-gold in color and have large, round spots concentrated near the tail.



Photos and Illustration: CCBY Joseph Tomelleri



The Snake River fine-spotted cutthroat is a different type of Yellowstone cutthroat. They live in the south fork of the Snake River. The fine-spotted cutthroat trout has the smallest spots of any trout in Idaho. Some have so many little spots that they look like they were sprinkled with pepper.

Bonneville cutthroat live in the southeastern corner of Idaho. They can be found living in Bear Lake and the streams surrounding the lake. This fish can grow to be 15 pounds in Bear Lake! The reason they can get so big is because this cutthroat eats more fish. Most cutthroat eat mainly insects. Not very many insects live in Bear Lake, so the cutthroat living there eat zooplankton when they are small. Zooplankton

are tiny floating animals in the water. When the cutthroat get larger, they eat fish. A whitefish called the Bear Lake cisco is a favorite food of Bonneville cutthroat. Most fish become a bit lazy in the winter; it is harder for fish to find food. Not the Bonneville cutthroat! Bear Lake cisco lay eggs in the winter. The cisco is very active. Since Bonneville cutthroat eat cisco, they are active, too. Bonneville cutthroat are one of the only trout that get bigger and gain weight in the winter!

Keep an eye out for cutthroat trout next time you are fishing and exploring Idaho's waters. Remember to look for the red-orange slash on the throat. This is the easiest way to know if you are looking at a cutthroat.



Photos: CCBY Idaho Fish and Game



Monarch Butterfly

Idaho's State Insect

The monarch butterfly is beautiful and amazing. It is so special that it became Idaho's state insect in 1992.

One thing that makes the monarch so special is that it migrates! Unlike other butterflies, monarchs cannot survive cold winters as caterpillars, pupae or adults. They must travel to warmer climates. Monarchs travel long distances, using air currents and thermals to help them along. Some fly as far as 2,000 to 3,000 miles! Idaho's monarchs and others from western North America travel to California for the winter. They stay along the Pacific coast near the cities of Santa Cruz and San Diego. Monarchs travel between 50 to 100 miles a day. At night, they huddle close together in pine, fir and cedar trees to rest. Idaho's monarchs stay in California until the warmer, longer days tell them it is time to fly north. This is called the migrating generation. The migrating generation will not be seen in Idaho. They lay eggs while traveling north and die. This will happen three or four more times before monarchs finally reach Idaho.

Another thing that makes monarchs special is they can eat a plant called milkweed. Milkweed

contains toxins. Most animals cannot eat milkweed, but monarch caterpillars love to eat it. As they eat milkweed, the toxins build up in their bodies. If a bird or other predator tries to eat the monarch, it will get a big surprise. The toxins make the monarch taste terrible. The toxins also make the predator want to vomit. Smart predators learn not to eat an insect that will make them throw up.



Photos: Photos: CCBY Suzanne d Williams, Unsplash
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

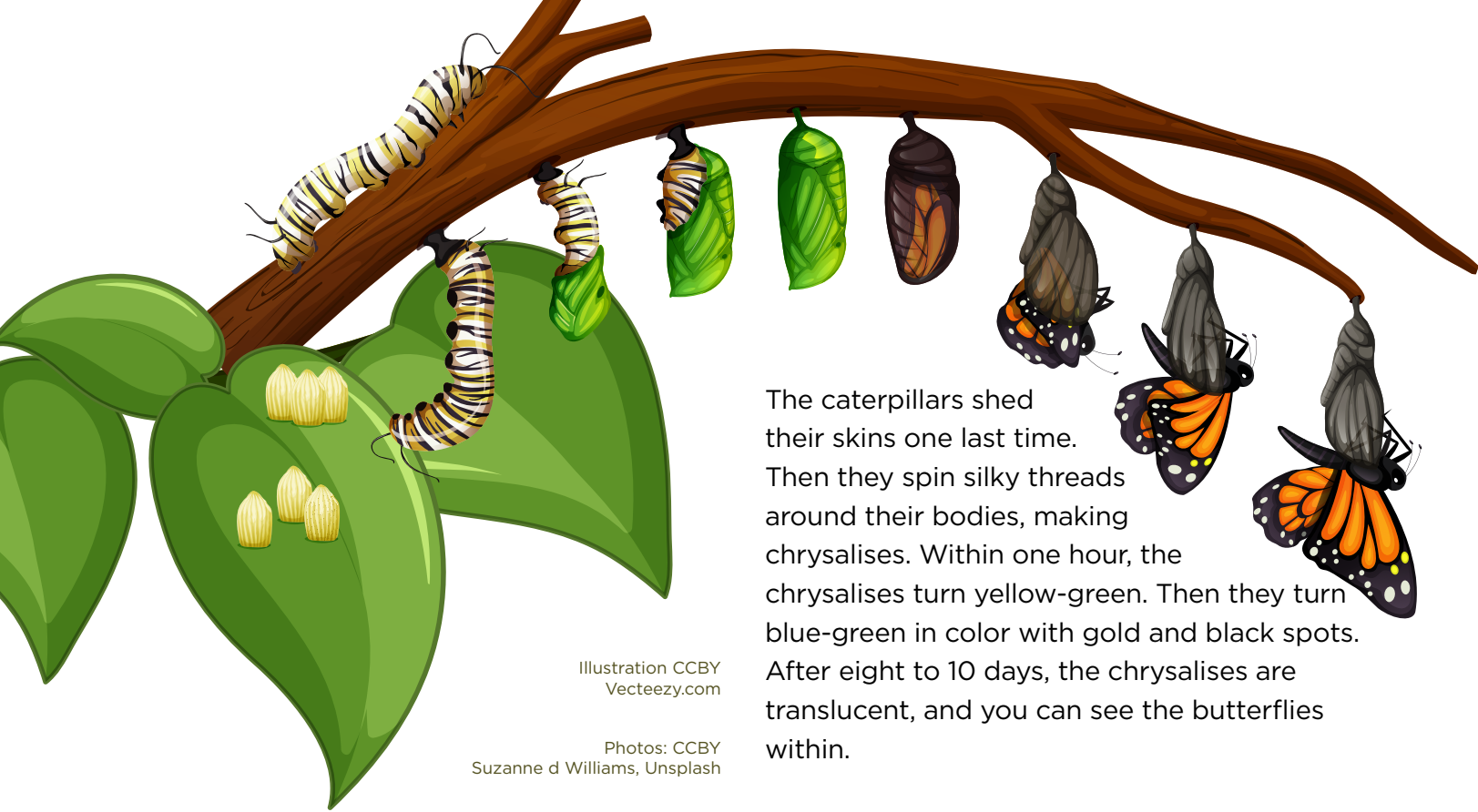


Illustration CCBY
Vecteezy.com

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Like all butterflies, monarchs change throughout their lives.

An adult female lays more than 500 eggs on the back of milkweed leaves. They usually lay only one egg on a plant. If they can't find enough milkweed plants to lay one egg per plant, they may lay more than one egg per plant or may lay fewer than 500 eggs. The eggs are tiny; they are about the same size as the period at the end of this sentence. Depending on the weather, the eggs hatch in three to 12 days.

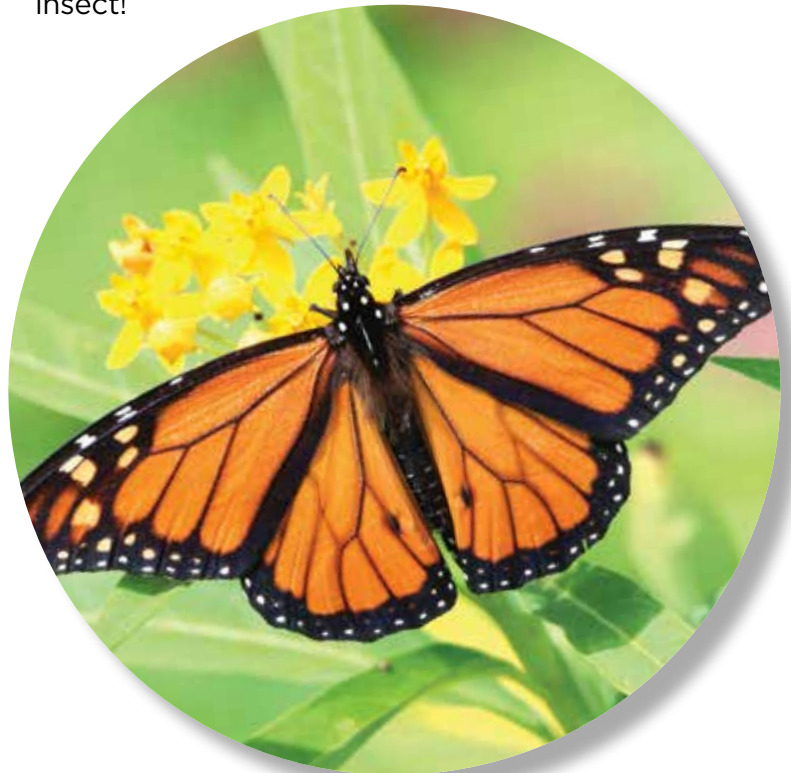
Monarch caterpillars are striped in black, white and yellow bands. They eat milkweed and grow quickly. During their two weeks as caterpillars, monarchs get 200 to 300 times bigger and shed their skin five times.

Then it is time for a big change. Caterpillars leave the plants where they were born and find safe places to spin their chrysalises. The caterpillars' salivary glands are adapted to make silk; they can turn their spit into silky threads! They spin small pillows on the back of branches where they hang from their abdomens.

The caterpillars shed their skins one last time. Then they spin silky threads around their bodies, making chrysalises. Within one hour, the chrysalises turn yellow-green. Then they turn blue-green in color with gold and black spots. After eight to 10 days, the chrysalises are translucent, and you can see the butterflies within.

After two weeks in the chrysalises, the adult monarchs break free. They pump fluid into the veins on their wings. This helps the wings unfold and become stiff. Monarchs are now ready to fly and drink nectar from flowers.

Monarch butterflies are truly remarkable. They have earned the honor of being Idaho's state insect!





Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Peregrine Falcon

Idaho's State Raptor



Idaho has both a state bird and a state raptor! The peregrine falcon became our state raptor in 2004. Falcons are a special kind of raptor. Unlike hawks, their compact, streamlined bodies are specialized for chasing and catching birds in flight. Long, pointed wings help falcons fly fast. They can also make quick turns in the air. Peregrine falcons can reach 242 miles per hour when diving for a bird---wow!

Fast flying makes it hard to breathe. Falcons take care of this problem by having a special bony peg in each nostril. It is called a tubercle (TOO-ber-cul). Scientists think tubercles change how air flows over the nostrils when a falcon is flying. This makes it easier for them to breathe when speeding through the air.

Another special adaptation of falcons is their beak. A special "tooth-and-notch" structure is found at the end of their beak. While it's not really a tooth, this structure helps a falcon easily break the neck of a prey animal. That might sound mean, but making a quick kill is important for all predators. It's hard to get a meal if your food fights back!

Peregrine falcons eat birds. They dive after flying birds like ducks, shorebirds and starlings.

Illustration CCBY Vecteezy.com

Sometimes, a peregrine will grab a bird right out of the air. Peregrines also hit birds with their feet and then swoop down to grab the falling bird. Since peregrine falcons are found everywhere except Antarctica, they adapted to eating many kinds of prey. After all, the word peregrine means wanderer.

Idaho has many connections to the peregrine falcon. This raptor nests in Idaho. Some Idaho falconers hunt with peregrine falcons. Idaho's 2004 commemorative quarter features a peregrine falcon. In addition, in 1970, a scientist named Dr. Tom Cade formed The Peregrine Fund which moved to Boise in 1984. Its mission was to help peregrine falcon populations recover from the careless use of chemicals during the 1950s and 1960s. This incredible falcon had become an endangered species.

After The Peregrine Fund moved to Boise, it opened the World Center for Birds of Prey. The important work of helping peregrine falcons continued. Dr. Cade, other scientists and falconers learned to raise and release peregrine falcons back to the wild. Their pioneering work helped save this falcon. That success was celebrated with the removal of the peregrine falcon from the Endangered Species List in August 1999.

The ceremony was held at the World Center for Birds of Prey. It was a proud moment for Idaho, Dr. Cade and everyone who worked so hard to save the peregrine falcon.





Appaloosa

Idaho's State Horse

The Nez Perce and Palouse tribes were the first to breed horses for specific traits. They wanted horses that were intelligent, fast and could travel long distances. Appaloosa horses sure fit this description! These horses are known for their spotted rumps, but they may have spots only on the rump or all over the body. Every horse's coat is different.



Hagerman Horse Fossil

Idaho's State Fossil

This fossil was discovered in the area now known as Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument. This area is the world's best place to find fossils that are three to four million years old! About 200 horse skeletons have been discovered, and twenty are complete skeletons. Scientists have learned a lot of information about this early horse. Fossils of younger and older horses have been found together. This tells people that the horses lived together in herds like today's wild horses. People come from all over the world to learn about the Hagerman horse fossils.



Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Syringa



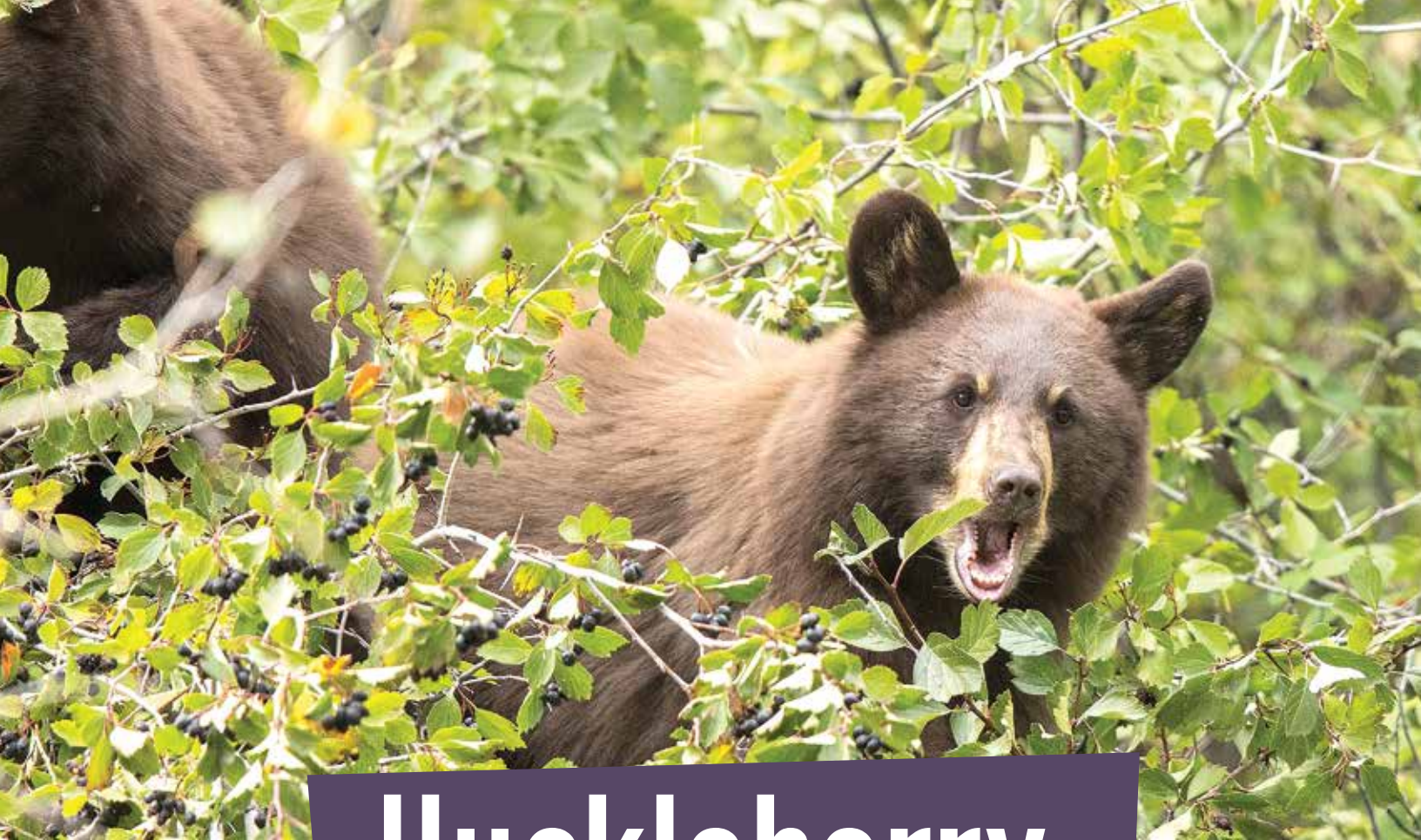
Idaho's State Flower

The syringa is a shrub that you can find growing in forests, along forest edges and along streams in drier canyons. The shrub grows three to eight feet tall. It flowers from late May through July. A mountainside covered in blooming syringa bushes is a delight for the eyes and nose. The flowers are white and showy. The only color on the flowers is yellow pollen. You will know if a syringa is blooming nearby from its smell. The flowers give off

a strong fragrance that smells like orange blossoms. This is the reason syringa is also known by the name mock orange. Mock means fake. The syringa shrub offers many benefits to wildlife and people. Many animals eat the plant and use it for shelter. Native Americans used syringa stems to make bows, arrows and combs. The stems are straight and sturdy. This makes the stems perfect for crafting tools and weapons.



Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game



Huckleberry

Idaho's State Fruit



People and bears agree. Huckleberries are delicious! Huckleberries look like blueberries but taste a bit different. Several kinds of huckleberry bushes grow in Idaho. The most common is the black or thin-leaved huckleberry. Black huckleberries can be found growing close to valley floors and high up on mountain tops. They may grow between one to six feet tall with berries as big as dimes! It takes a long time for huckleberry bushes to make fruit; they grow slowly. It may take some plants 15 years before they produce fruit. Huckleberry bushes have not been successfully grown on farms. The plants have adapted to living in the snowy mountains. They need a blanket of snow to cover them during the winter. Otherwise, they will die from the cold.



Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game



Western White Pine



Idaho's State Tree

Northern Idaho has more western white pine trees than any other state. At one time, the tree was common, but now it is much harder to find. Diseases, insects and harvesting have all contributed to its decline. Western white pines can be big. They may grow to be 175 feet with a trunk diameter of five to eight feet. The largest western white pine in the world is found near Elk River, Idaho. It is 219 feet high!



Potato



Idaho's State Vegetable

Idaho is known for growing tasty potatoes. We have the perfect growing conditions. The plants thrive in warm, sunny days and cool nights. Our rich soil, water and climate are perfect for growing the world's best potatoes.



Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons
Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Star Garnet



Idaho's State Gem

Idaho star garnets are beautiful!

Garnets are a natural stone similar to quartz. They are usually a dark purple color with a star floating across the surface. This is a rare stone. They are usually only found in Idaho in Latah and Benewah counties. People come from all over the world to search for an Idaho star garnet.



Square Dance



Idaho's State Folk Dance



This popular folk dance got its name from the shape formed by the dancers. The dance is performed by four couples or groups of four couples. Each couple makes up a side of a square. Square dancing is usually performed to music from a fiddle, accordion, banjo and guitar. Square dancing is unique because a "caller" tells the dancers which movements to make. Dancers need to listen carefully and know the names of the movement for the dance to work.

Photos: CCBY Flickr Creative Commons

Illustration: CCBY NJ, Idaho Fish and Game

Dance Photo: CCBY Idaho State Federation of Square and Round Dance Clubs

It is fun and easy to learn (you don't have to be a "dancer"), all Idaho State Clubs offer free lessons, please contact the Idaho Federation of Square and Round Dance Clubs Inc at www.idahosquaredancing.com for more information.

Idaho State Emblems

Please unscramble the words!

1. alodh naGti anardelmSa

This state emblem
yelps.

2. tnoMinua ediurlbB

It likes to build nests
in cavities.

3. rtChouatt tuTor

It was named for the
red slash marks on
its throat.

4. nraMcoh ftryBtuel

It flies to California
for the winter.

5. eieenrPrg IncoFa

It is known for flying
fast.

6. loaoAppas

It was bred by the
Nez Perce to be
intelligent and fast.

7. aramgHne oeHrs ilFsos

This emblem lived in
Idaho 3-4 million
years ago.

8. ainrySg

It has white, showy
flowers.

9. erHucrylbyke

It looks like a
blueberry.

10. eseWmnt hWtie enPi

It may grow to be
175 feet tall.

11. aottoP

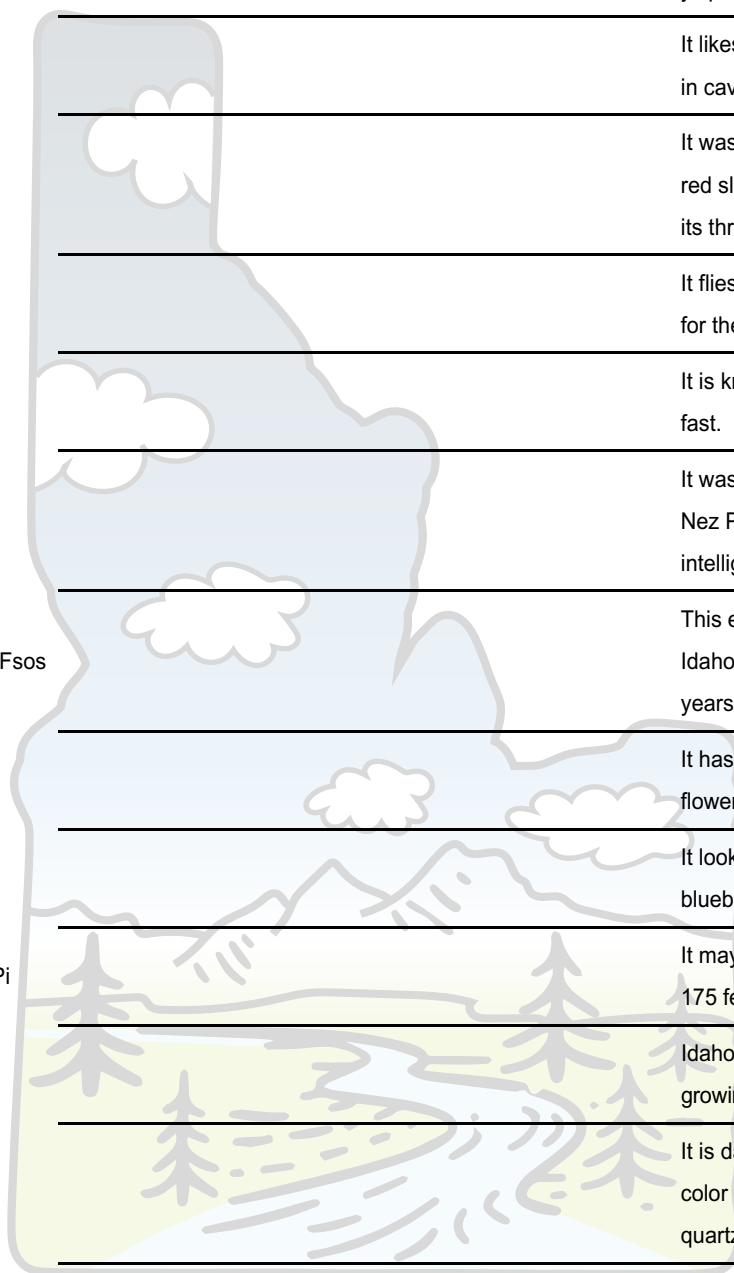
Idaho is known for
growing this emblem.

12. daloh raSt enartG

It is dark purple in
color and similar to
quartz.

13. uearqS ceaDn

You need 4 couples
to make it work.



Wildlife Express

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WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have a letter, poem or question for Wildlife Express,
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or

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